



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Riccardo Giacconi Videohistory Collection, 2004

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Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Riccardo Giacconi Videohistory Collection
Identifier:	Record Unit 9617
Date:	2004
Extent:	5 audiotapes (Reference copies).videotapes (Reference copies).
Creator:::	Giacconi, Riccardo, interviewee
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9617, Riccardo Giacconi Videohistory Collection

Historical Note

Riccardo Giacconi (1931-), astrophysicist and Nobel laureate, is regarded for groundbreaking research the field of X-ray astronomy. Much of Giacconi's pioneering work took place during his tenure at American Science & Engineering, Inc. where Giacconi and his team discovered the first celestial X-ray source outside the solar system and designed and fabricated the first imaging X-ray telescope.

Giacconi received his Ph.D. in physics in 1954 from the University of Milan where he began his professional career as a member of the teaching staff. He was awarded a two-year Fulbright Fellowship to Indiana University in 1956. After one year as a research associate at the Cosmic Ray Laboratory at Princeton University, he took the post of Senior Scientist, Vice President in charge of the Space Research and Systems Division, at the American Science & Engineering, Inc. in 1959. He stayed at AS&E, serving as executive Vice President and a member of the board of directors, until 1973, when he left to become Associate Director of the High Energy Astrophysics Division of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CFA) and Professor of astronomy at Harvard University. He remained at the CFA until 1981 when he was appointed first Director of the Space Telescope Science Institute and Professor of physics and astronomy at The Johns Hopkins University. In 1991 he was also appointed professor of physics at the University of Milan. Giacconi directed the European Southern Observatory where he oversaw the development and construction of the Very Large Telescope from 1993 to 1999. He then served as President of Associated Universities, Inc., the operator of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory from 1999 to 2004. He was then appointed a research professor at The Johns Hopkins University. Giacconi has been awarded numerous prizes for his scientific research, including the 2002 Nobel Prize in physics for the discovery of cosmic x-ray sources.

Introduction

The Smithsonian Videohistory Program, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation from 1986 until 1992, used video in historical research. Additional collections have been added since the grant project ended. Videohistory uses the video camera as a historical research tool to record moving visual information. Video works best in historical research when recording people at work in environments, explaining artifacts, demonstrating process, or in group discussion. The experimental program recorded projects that reflected the Institution's concern with the conduct of contemporary science and technology.

Smithsonian historians participated in the program to document visual aspects of their on-going historical research. Projects covered topics in the physical and biological sciences as well as in technological design and manufacture. To capture site, process, and interaction most effectively, projects were taped in offices, factories, quarries, laboratories, observatories, and museums. Resulting footage was duplicated, transcribed, and deposited in the Smithsonian Institution Archives for scholarship, education, and exhibition. The collection is open to qualified researchers.

Descriptive Entry

David H. DeVorkin, Curator, Department of Astronautics, National Air and Space Museum, conducted a videotaped interview of Giacconi after a January 22, 2004, symposium in Giacconi's honor held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and sponsored by its Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention & Innovation. The interview discussed his education, research, and career in astrophysics.

This collection consists of one interview session, totaling approximately 5 hours of recordings and 110 pages of transcript.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Astrophysicists
- Astrophysics
- Cosmic rays -- Research -- History
- Interviews
- Nobel Prize winners
- Oral history

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Videotapes

Names:

- DeVorkin, David H., 1944-, interviewer
- Giacconi, Riccardo
- Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
- Hubble Space Telescope (Spacecraft)
- Johns Hopkins University

Project Starfish
Space Telescope Science Institute (U.S.)

Container Listing

Interviews

Interviews

Session 1: January 22, 2004

Interviews

Conducted after a symposium held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, David Devorkin solicited a personal perspective on the career of Riccardo Giacconi, with emphasis on his formative years, influences, and career, including reminiscences of his early years and education; participation on Project Starfish; his role as principal investigator for NASA programs, including SAS-A (Uhuru), SO-54 (Skylab), HEAO-2 (*Einstein*), AXAF (Chandra), 1973-1981; work on the Hubble Space Telescope; and thoughts on the exploration of Mars.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 1-110 of video recording, 5 hours.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 5.0 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 5 Beta SP videotapes
- Preservation Masters: 5 Motion JPEG 2000 digital video files and 5 Mpeg2 digital video files
- Reference Copies: 5 VHS videotapes, 5 audiotapes, 5 Windows Media Video files.